

# Unsearchable Riches of Christ - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The pathway of the glory is the reduction of the natural human element and the positive increase of Christ, leading to God's final approval and satisfaction.*

**Duration:** 36:41

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:22, Isaiah 6:1

**Topics:** "Riches Of Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the last chapter of the book of Acts, which represents an accumulation of opposing forces against the preaching of the word of God. Despite facing imprisonment, animosity, and threats to his life, the apostle Paul remained steadfast in his ambition to preach the word in Rome. The speaker emphasizes that although from a human perspective, Paul's situation seemed like an end and a limitation, it was actually the most glorious chapter in the book. The pathway to experiencing the glory of God involves reducing the influence of our natural human elements and surrendering to God's will.

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## Transcript

We just continue in consideration of the pathway of the glory. We have traced the glory through the book of the Acts up to a certain point, more especially in the life of the Apostle Paul. When we come to the end of that book, we find ourselves in the presence of a consummate and inclusive revelation, expression, manifestation of the glory at the end of the earthly course of the Lord's servant Paul.

It is impressive to note on the one side what an accumulation of opposing forces is represented in the last chapter of that book. Way back there in Palestine, the imprisonment in Caesarea for two years, the tremendous uprising of the whole Jewish regime and hierarchy, and Gentile cooperation as in the case of the Lord Jesus, bitter animosity and hatred and scheming to destroy him, leading at last to his being sent to Rome for the final judgment, and putting into effect of all that uniting of earth and hell to have this man and what he represented done away, finished. In the midst of it, when everything seemed so threatening, particularly threatening to the one ambition of his life, to preach the word in the great imperial center of the world, Rome, every circumstance seemed to say, that will not be, that cannot be, you never will realize that life desire.

The Lord just stood by him and said, fear not, Paul, as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness in Rome. And through it all, the storms naturally and the storms spiritually, the little word is,

and so we came to Rome. But in Rome, a prisoner, all the adverse forces, spiritual, satanic and human, determined to bring that ministry to an end by bringing that man to an end.

Over the wide area, things moved toward that. In churches in Asia, which owed their existence instrumentally to this man, and owed all that they had spiritually to him under the Lord, they turned against him. All they which be in Asia, they turned from him.

False brethren betrayed him. What an accumulation of things gathered and focused upon that prison in Rome. All saying with their own meaning, limitation, curtailment, shortening of tenure, of influence in life.

That's the natural satanic situation very imperfectly described and set out. On the human side, looked at just purely as a natural situation. Everything in that prison and those chains seems to say what the enemy meant and what men meant.

This is an end. And this is a curtailment in every way. And yet, looked at from heaven's standpoint and from history's standpoint, it is the most glorious chapter of the whole book.

They said limitation. Heaven said enlargement. They said narrowing down, curtailment.

Heaven said expansion. They said death and an end. Heaven said a new beginning.

Not only of the man in heaven, but of his ministry. For it was out of that prison, imprisoned. And all that which was set for the ending of that ministry, out of that has come the greatest ministry that he fulfilled.

These letters from that prison embrace a fullness of divine revelation that can be found nowhere else. An enrichment for the church beyond, beyond our telling. An expansion of ministry far, far beyond the whole range of his missionary journeys, personally.

Today, in every country of this world, Paul is known. Perhaps not in every spot in every country, but in every country. From far east to far west, far north to far south, that man is known.

And his ministry has gone. And today, through all the battle and the controversy over what is called Paulinism, the theological world, through all the battle of the years, Paul is on top, you know. They just cannot cope with this man.

They cannot silence him. They cannot account for him. You probably will not know a great deal of that battle.

Those of us who have read and studied through many years this conflict of ideologies and philosophies, theologies, focusing upon this man, Paul, know how at one point the whole thing became just this issue. Away from Paul, back to Christ. Back to Christ.

Or back to Jesus, they put it. Away from Paul. Paul has betrayed Christianity.

This sort of thing. Terrific battle on that ground. But today, the very schools that were represented by that position are saying Paul is the interpreter of Christ, the supreme interpreter.

That is, just by the way, as thrown into the whole situation. You see, this man's life started in a blaze of glory. Glory descended and struck him.

As we said earlier, that glory went right through his life. He never got away from that. Never got away from that.

He had seen the glory of the Lord. And although the end of his earthly cost seemed naturally to be so inglorious, so much, speaking for apparent triumph of the forces which were against him, two thousand years, had not quenched that glory. He shines with it today.

We, a little minute fragment of a very great worldwide whole, are here at this time glorying in the glory which has come through that man. So I say that the last chapter of the book of the Acts is just the consummate and inclusive setting forth of the whole book, showing the pathway of the glory. And just on that, I want to close this time.

What is the pathway of the glory? It has two sides. The one side is the reduction of the natural human element. It demands that.

It will always work that way. The reduction, the nullifying, the weakening, the emptying, the undoing of the natural human element, man. Running alongside of that, the positive increase of Christ.

The pathway of the glory is on the one side and an increasing, ever increasing setting aside of the natural man, even as a Christian, and in the work of the Lord, bringing more and more to the consciousness that it must be the Lord or there will be nothing at all. The human factor is increasingly of no account. That's the pathway of the glory.

A very happy thing, perhaps, to contemplate, if you look at it on that side alone. But it is true. Here is this man, naturally and humanly in weakness, naturally and humanly in limitation.

As a man in bonds. But there is the other side. The enlargement of what is of the Lord.

Mighty, marvellous enlargement of Christ. So that these letters from the prison are a natural setting forth of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. And you ought to read your first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians.

See it? The place the Lord Jesus is given. Now you can see this, and it is as well that we do take at least a glance at it. By the opposite, go right through your Bible and you will see that whenever man put forth his hand upon divine things, that glory went out.

That is a word written over Eden, isn't it? The Lord's precaution, lest he put forth his hand. Lest he put forth his hand. The Lord knew quite well that if he put forth his hand on divine things, that was an end of the glory.

And that's exactly what happened. And right through your Old Testament you can see this. Case after case, when man pressed him, pressed him, and put his hand upon divine things.

The glory went out. You know how Isaiah says, The day that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, seated upon a throne, and his train filled the temple. But the tragedy of Isaiah, you remember that was the man, and one of the greatest.

An idol of Isaiah the prophet himself, who reached great dimensions of power and influence, and earthly glory, and then presumed upon it, and forced his way in to the temple, to the sanctuary, to the altar. Fear came upon men, and they said, It does not pertain unto you, King Isaiah, to offer incense. But he spurned the warning, and was smitten, a leper, and died in shame with all his own earthly glory gone.

He forced himself in, and lay his hand upon divine things, and so far as he was concerned. And for that time, the glory departed. It was a great reversing of the situation, when Isaiah saw the Lord on the throne, no longer Isaiah, the Lord on the throne.

Then the glory comes back. When man usurps the place of God, the glory goes up. That's one instance, you remember, David, with the best of motives.

Remember the ark, and the ark is always the ark of the glory. Remember that. Always the ark of the glory.

The glory of Israel is focused upon and centered in that ark. David, with the purest and best of motives, heard of bringing the ark to Jerusalem, and mistakenly formed a new cart after Philistine, after the Philistine manor, a new cart, put the ark on it, contrary to the divine word, to bring it up to Jerusalem. They were apparently having a very good time on the road until they reached the threshing floor.

And the oxen stumbled, and Azar put forth his hand upon the ark, his hand on the ark. And the Lord smote Azar there that he died. The ark was turned aside, and for long, long weary months, it says, the time was long.

It was in the house of Obed-Edom, and Israel were weary. The glory had gone. Because man put his hand on divine things.

And so we could go on like that. But there it is. When the glory of life, glory of joy, glory of spiritual fullness, glory of divine power departs, comes under shadow, or is eclipsed, or limited, it is usually because man's hand has touched the testimony.

Man's nature has insinuated itself. That is, his judgment, his ideas, his thoughts, his will, his emotions. David's mind got to work.

David's emotions got to work. It was a very emotional scene, that. Very emotional scene.

And David's will got to work. So that his soul, mind, heart and will came out to touch divine things. It was man.

And whenever it's like that, if our judgments, and our emotions, and our decisions lay hold of the things of God, we will be left without the glory. Glory will depart, or the glory will be under eclipse, or the glory will be limited. It's a long story, lest he put forth his hand.

So that's dark side. But it's as well, I say, that we take a glance at that, because that is so largely the trouble today. There's an absence of the glory, or a limiting of the glory.

Our hearts cry for the glory to return. We are always asking and praying that the glory of the Lord may be manifested. Known and felt.

We've got to get out of the way before that can be. Give the Lord all the place to be all the Lord. So on the one side there is the limiting of human abilities and powers, mind and will, ability.

The other side, by that limiting or excluding the coming in of the Lord, the increase of Christ. That Christ is our wisdom. Christ is our strength.

Christ is our will. Christ is all. Dear friends, that is the pathway of the glory.

It's painful to the flesh. Very painful. Because this flesh is very strong, stronger than we would believe.

It's there. But we must finish. And finish on perhaps a happier note.

A much happier note. While we must understand what the glory demands. See the way of the glory.

We do want to have at the end a final look at the ultimate glory. So that we remember Peter's word. And the chief shepherd shall appear.

You shall receive a crown of glory. A crown of glory. That's the end.

It's a symbolic word of course. A crown of glory. I'm not very ambitious to have a literal crown put on my head.

And for the life of me I don't see if I'm going to ever have three crowns on my head literally. And there are three crowns mentioned in the Bible. It means being crowned.

Having your life and your work crowned. Capped, if you like, with glory. That's the last picture.

The crown of glory. What is it? Well, I've mentioned there are three crowns. You know them well probably.

There is the crown of righteousness. Which we'll receive on certain grounds. The crown of righteousness.

Which the Lord, the righteous God, the judge will give. Paul says, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me.

Not to me only. What was he meaning? Know that the last part of his life, one of his prison letters was that beautiful letter to his beloved and longed for children in Philippi. And he said, leaving the things which are behind, I press toward the mark, the prize of the on high calling of God.

Governor, I count not myself to have attained. Neither am I already perfect. But this one thing I do.

If by any means I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, but the righteousness which is of God through faith. The last longing cry of the apostle was that the righteousness of God through Christ should adorn him. He should attain unto it.

That is, that he should stand before the throne of the eternal bondings without any qualms, any fears, any flinchings. Stand justified. Stand in a righteousness not his own.

Perfect. Perfect in righteousness. And that is what he meant by the crown of righteousness.

Stand at last before the eternal throne of infinite holiness clothed with divine righteousness with all his own unrighteousness and imperfection gone forever. Robed in righteousness. That he called the crowning thing for his life.

The fullest realization of his ambition. I may stand perfect, lacking nothing. I'm not already perfect.

I'm not already attained. But if only I can attain to being found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, but his righteousness. Glorious in.

That's a crown to covet. That's a crown to suffer for. To live for.

To be abandoned for. A crown indeed of glory, that. For, dear friends, you and I are in agreement on this, that if there's one thing we long for, it is the full and final escape from our own sinfulness.

This accursed fallen nature. All that it carries with it. The crown of righteousness.

And then, the crown of life. Feed our faithful unto death, said the Lord, and I will give thee a crown of life. A crown of life.

What is that? Faithful unto death. To be answered with a crown of life. All right, it's perfectly clear, isn't it? The crown of life means that death has no power.

Is robbed of its power. Death as a power is destroyed. And life, divine life, resurrection life, is mightier than all the power of death.

Stand in the power of his resurrection in that same letter, in the same part of that letter, as we have quoted in the Philippian letter. For, utters those words so familiar to us that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection. Cry at the end of his life, the power of his resurrection.

That is the ultimate and final nullifying of death in all its forms and in its whole power. Standing in the good of a life which can never, never be touched by death again. Move over to John and the Revelation, there shall be no more death.

The crown of life. And then the third crown is the one we are speaking about, the crown of glory. You know what we've said about glory? Glory is the expression of the full satisfaction of God's nature.

Can that ever be for me, for you? That crown, the full satisfaction of God's own nature, that is what he has called us to, redeemed us for, is working in us unto. And we'll walk to the end for this crown of glory. And although perhaps at the end of our longest life we shall not have reached the place where we do at that point utterly, fully and finally satisfy the nature of God, for in our last moments and our last breath there will still be a lot of imperfection about us.

But remember, when he takes the responsibility of ending the process, he makes up all that would have been if he hadn't done so. That is, in the moment, the twinkling of an eye, when shall they change? All that we lacked then will be added. All that would have been if we had lived on and on and on under his grace, under his power, will be put to our account.

I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness. I go to sleep not altogether in thy likeness, but I awake in thy likeness. It's just that, the mighty thing that God is going to add to those who are faithful, faithful to the end.

Not perfect, but in the way of being changed into the same glory. Not perfect, but in the way of being changed into the same glory. From one degree to another, from one image to another, the crown of glory is God's final approval.

God's final approval. Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, and believe me, the Lord will never be joyful, really, over what is not according to his own nature. When he says, Thy joy of thy Lord, he will have got what his heart had been set upon.

And the crown of glory, God's full and complete approval. Satisfaction. Oh, what a wonderful, almost unbelievable prospect there is along the pathway of glory.

Well, I must leave all the rest with you. All the other connections of riches, and this very, very imperfect and limited setting forth of the riches of his grace and the riches of his glory. May the Lord just himself follow on and teach all that we cannot teach, that we yet to know about this, but use even this for our help, our encouragement to go on in the way of the glory unto the everlasting glory.

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